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8000 Workers Protest Cancellation of Annual Bonuses as Strikes Continue Across China

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8000 workers from Foster Electric Company's Nanning Factory in Guangxi Province went on strike. The Foster Electric Company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of a Japanese company, the Foster Group. Workers walked off the job to protest managers retaining their year-end bonuses while cancelling the workers' bonuses. The workers hoped to win fair and reasonable treatment though the strike.

Police blockaded the main entrance of the factory to prevent the workers from marching into the streets to demonstrate. Since the majority of the workers are female, the strike was not met with the type of violent force that police usually use to break up these types of demonstrations.

Later on January 16th, the management decided to compromise and announced it would provide an annual bonus of 250 RMB to all workers. The announcement also stated that all workers should return to work the next day, January 17th. It went on to threaten anyone who continued to protest with immediate loss of their jobs.

According to Radio Free Asia, the workers went back to work on the 17th. However, some workers thought their treatment was still unfair, since they worked 10 hours a day and only got 250 RMB at the end of the year while some managers got more than 10,000 RMB. In addition, the factory is very stingy with its Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) vacation days, only giving workers the legally mandated 7 days off. Therefore, it was impossible for a lot of migrant workers to go back to their home regions to be with their families during the most important holiday of the year.

On the eve of the Spring Festival, the wave of strikes that have swept China continues unabated. On January 13th, 2000 workers from Changhe Auto Factory in Jiangxi Province went on strike because the factory decided to sell the "Changhe" brand, which may result in some or all of them being laid off. The demonstration is still ongoing. The incident was followed by a strike initiated by 4000 workers from Sanyo Electric Company's Shekou Factory on January 14th because the company was sold, but the workers did not get any compensation at the end of their work year.

From November 2011 on, the world has seen a wave of strikes sweep across China. Executive Director of China Labor Watch Li Qiang said Chinese workers are more aware of their rights and how they can work together to protect them than they have been in the past. It has been long in coming, but the era of Chinese workers' rights may be close at hand.

Links of reports from Chinese media:

Foster Electric Strike: <http://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/gx-01172012100418.html> 

Sanyo Electric Strike: <http://finance.ifeng.com/news/corporate/20120117/5465362.shtml> 

Changhe Auto Strike: <http://roll.sohu.com/20120117/n332366066.shtml> 

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